



## LOWER KOSHKONONG CREEK WATERSHED (LR11)



*WDNR staff studies the breached Rockdale dam before completely removing the remaining structures.*

The Lower Koshkonong Creek Watershed covers an area of 220 square miles, or 140,480 acres. Two-thirds of the land area is evenly divided between Rock and Dane counties, with 26% of the remaining area in Jefferson County and 5% in Walworth County. Eight lakes are larger than 25 acres, six of these larger than 100 acres. The watershed includes Lake Koshkonong and the Rock River from Ft. Atkinson to the Indianford Dam. Streams in the watershed include Saunders, Allen and Otter creeks, and a portion of the main stem of the Rock River. No Class I or II trout streams or smallmouth bass streams exist in the watershed. Stream water quality is "fair." While the majority of wetlands in the watershed have been drained for agricultural purposes, many significant wetlands remain. The Rockdale dam was removed in 2001 and Koshkonong Creek now runs free of impoundments. Fish and wildlife habitat is expected to improve following dam removal.

### Soil Loss Rates

In Dane County, the towns of Albion and Christiana have soil loss rates of 8.1 and 8.3 tons per acre per year, respectively. The town of Oakland in Jefferson County has the second highest total soil loss in the county. The Rock County portion of this watershed has an estimated annual erosion rate of 7.8 tons/acre/year; it is the third-ranked priority area for soil loss prevention in Rock County. Such soil loss, coupled with wetland drainage and stream channel straightening, indicates significant amounts of sediment likely reaches the watershed's surface waters, adversely affecting habitat and water quality. Except for Lake Koshkonong water quality data for streams in the watershed is lacking or insufficient to document any adverse water quality effects (WDNR 1996).



*Soil erosion by cows trampling streambanks*

Land use in the watershed is predominately agricultural. In 1983, 55% of the watershed was in agricultural use, 25% of which had high erosion potential (WDNR 1996). Urban pollution potential is high from the growing areas of Fort Atkinson, Cambridge, Oakland and Edgerton. Each of these urban areas discharges municipal wastewater and stormwater.

This watershed has a high susceptibility for groundwater contamination based on WDNR groundwater susceptibility mapping.

**Table 1. Municipalities in the Lower Koshkonong Creek Watershed (LR11)**

Municipality	County	1995 Population	2000 Population	Percent Growth 1995 - 2000
City of Fort Atkinson	Jefferson	10,604	11,621	9.6
City of Edgerton	Rock	4,385	4,933	12.5
Town of Koshkonong	Jefferson	3,097	3,395	9.6
Town of Oakland	Jefferson	2,743	3,135	14.3
Village of Cambridge	Dane Jefferson	1,034	1,101	6.5



*Purple coneflower*

### **City of Fort Atkinson**

Growth in the city of Fort Atkinson has been moderate compared to other municipalities in the basin. The city's population, now more than 11,600, indicates that sewer service area planning and wellhead protection planning should take place, as well as stormwater management and erosion control planning. As small communities in this watershed grow, a comprehensive stormwater management plan should be in place--a plan that coordinates recommendations with local master and land use plans and state and regional planning goals (Kroner 1996).

### **Village of Cambridge**

The village of Cambridge has a population of over 1,100. Its population grows to roughly six times that number of people during the summer season. The village's facilities plan should be reviewed to ensure that the city's wastewater treatment plant could accommodate these seasonal fluctuations. Sewerage capacity and land use issues have been a top concern in this area, as the Oakland Sanitary District, which sends its effluent to the Cambridge wastewater treatment plant, has developed a moratorium on multi-scale development, allowing only single family development. The town of Oakland developed a draft land use plan that will limit unsewered development and build in a developer payback to cover infrastructure costs. This plan does not address the existing approved plans that continue to be developed and may yet add another 100 homes. The single family development moratorium may encourage urban/suburban sprawl, precipitating the loss of prime agricultural land and leading to low density growth that drives up the cost of wastewater treatment. While sewer service area planning is conducted in the Dane County portion of Cambridge, the Jefferson County portion, which is growing more rapidly than the west side, has no sewer service area planning in place. Cambridge should work with Dane County, Jefferson County and surrounding urbanizing areas to develop a comprehensive long-term sewer service area plan that addresses the entire urban area and which reflects the facilities plan for the Cambridge wastewater treatment plant.

### **City of Edgerton**

The city of Edgerton has grown by 12.5% over the past five years. The Edgerton area's most notable impact on local water, however, stems from the effects of the Edgerton landfill, which contributes volatile organic compounds to the area's shallow aquifer. In 1992, residents of Rock County living between the landfill and the Rock River have been under a drinking water advisory due to groundwater contaminated with trichloroethylene. Edgerton and other involved parties settled a lawsuit over the source of clean-up costs; a new public water supply system was installed.

## **STREAMS**



*Roadside erosion*

**Allen Creek** This creek is an exceptional resource water with good ecological diversity and the least darter, a species on the special concern list. Wetlands adjacent the stream and near the Rock River provide northern pike spawning habitat. A large area of regulated wetlands buffers the stream. Many tributaries to Allen Creek have been ditched, increasing sediment loads. Polluted runoff from streambank pasturing in the creek's lower reaches and steep slopes contribute sediment and nutrient-laden runoff to the stream and eventually Lake Koshkonong.



*Rockdale dam: before, during and after removal*

Road salt runoff from State Highway 26 affects the creek. Past road construction on State Highway 26 deposited sediment in the stream channel downstream of the Highway 26 bridge. The proposed construction of a Highway 26 bypass around Fort Atkinson may adversely affect water quality if construction site erosion control measures are not adequately sited, installed and maintained.

**Koshkonong Creek (Lower)** This reach of Koshkonong Creek still flows in its natural channel for most of its distance. Lower Koshkonong Creek is a low-gradient, meandering stream, which has formed a small delta at its mouth on Lake Koshkonong. The only impoundment on the creek, the Rockdale dam, was breached in September 2000 and removed in June 2001. Stream bank restoration and revegetation to reduce sedimentation downstream is in progress. The removal of the Rockdale dam will improve fish migration and habitat quality of the stream. A partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Madison will provide a detailed analysis on sedimentation movement after dam removal. The stream is classified as a warm water sport fishery, but its uses and potential are impaired by agricultural runoff. Highly intensive agricultural operations, including one muck farm, in the drainage area affect water quality. The Upper Koshkonong Watershed contributes a significant portion of nutrient and sediment loads.

Bullhead and rough fish dominate the fishery although northern pike provide a fair fishery in the lower reaches. Wetlands near the creek mouth provide spawning areas for northern pike.

**Otter Creek** is a low-gradient stream draining to Lake Koshkonong from the south. Portions of its upper reaches in Rock County have been ditched and straightened. Water quality has been impaired by the channel modifications. The stream has periodic water quality problems after storms when it carries a heavy sediment load. The fishery is dominated by forage species but game fish do inhabit the stream in varying numbers. Otter Creek's major asset is its wildlife habitat. More than 1,500 acres of wetlands exist in the upper half of its drainage area. This includes portions of Storrs Lake and Lima Marsh State Wildlife Areas. These areas have good spring and fall waterfowl migrations as well as nongame birds.



*Saunders Creek*

**Saunders Creek** rises in southeast Dane County and flows 10 miles south to join the Rock River south of Edgerton. It is a meandering creek draining 36 miles of predominately agricultural lands. Parts of the creek have been ditched and wetlands drained in its watershed. Polluted runoff from pastures and barnyards and erosion from fields--exacerbated by the ditching--carry sediments to the stream, affecting water quality. Some remnant wet meadows between Edgerton and Albion and above Albion still exist, providing limited Northern pike spawning habitat wetlands.

## LAKES

**Lake Koshkonong** A large shallow impoundment of the Rock River, Lake Koshkonong exhibits the same water quality problems as other impoundments in southern Wisconsin but on a much larger scale. The lake was originally a shallow and deep-water marsh; a dam constructed in 1850 created a shallow lake. The dam was rebuilt in 1917, raising the lake level an additional two feet. The lake is a major stop-over



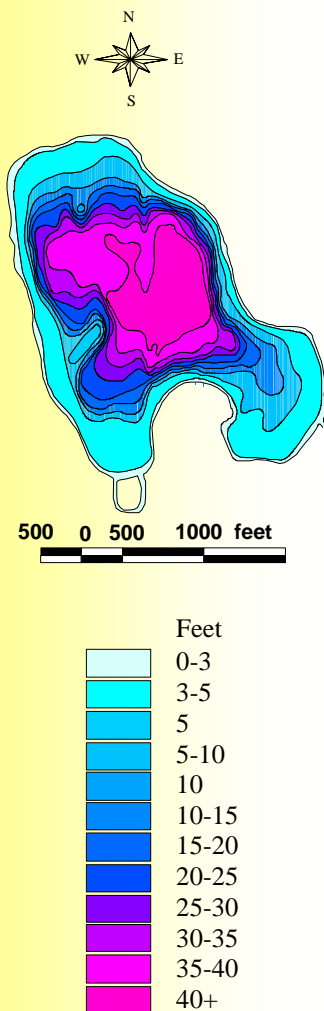
*Fishkill*

for migratory waterfowl and was renowned for waterfowl hunting. The drainage area above the lake encompasses 2,640 square miles.

Tremendous sediment and nutrient loads from the Rock River, Koshkonong Creek and other tributaries enter the lake annually. These loads are primarily from agricultural and some urban sources. In addition, shoreline erosion is severe on the lake. Failing septic systems were a problem in the past but the creation of a sanitary district around a portion of the lake has reduced the impact of this source on water quality. Carp are a widespread problem despite a large commercial carp fishery; the carp destroy habitat and increase the lake's existing level of turbidity. As a result, severe nuisance growth of algae and algae blooms are common, often resulting in fish kills.

The lake's shallow depth combined with its long fetch--the distance the wind blows across it uninterrupted-- causes serious shoreline erosion during major storms. All these conditions combined adversely affect water quality and the lake's fisheries.

*Lake Ripley: depth profile*



The Indianford Dam, which controls the water level of the lake, is in need of repair. The allocation of repair costs among the counties and towns that border the lake has become a local political issue. One group of property owners wants a higher water level to improve boating while another group wants lower levels to protect and improve wetland habitat.

**Lake Ripley**, a small kettle lake, has good water quality and a very good sport fishery. Much of the lake's shoreline is developed with the village of Cambridge on the west end and summer cottages and year-round homes on the north and south shores. There is a wetland on the east end of the lake that remains undeveloped. Agricultural runoff contributes nutrients and sediments to the lake, and the village of Cambridge and lake cottages and homes also degrade the lake's water quality. Excess nutrients has spurred the growth of Eurasian water milfoil, an aggressive non-native plant, in the lake. a 1989 aquatic plant survey indicates milfoil, which grows in the lake in depths from roughly 2 to 12 feet, has spread to about 50 percent of the lake, concentrating boat traffic in the lake's middle.

Lake Ripley has been the subject of a small-scale priority watershed project since 1994, when its appraisal report was published. The appraisal work indicates that the lake's water quality is on a continued steady decline due to excess phosphorus and sediment inputs. In former years these inputs were almost exclusively from agricultural fields. Residential development of the lake's immediate subwatershed, including 70 percent of its direct shoreline, contributes to high levels of phosphorus and sediment, has lowered aquatic species diversity, and threatens the survival of the Blanding's turtle, an endangered species in Wisconsin.

In 1993 the lake experienced its first reported blue-green algae bloom. High precipitation levels that year and ensuing years have contributed to the influx of pollutants, reflecting the primary source of nutrients--watershed contributions. Lake Ripley is dimictic, meaning it stratifies twice yearly, becoming anoxic in its hypolimnion during winter and summer. This condition likely contributes phosphorus from in-lake sediment during spring and fall mixing; WDNR researchers are involved in estimating in-lake sediment contributions to overall phosphorus loading rates. The lake's priority watershed plan should guide management efforts into the future.



**Clear Lake** is a small seepage and spring-fed lake that has some cottage development and a campground using septic systems. Water quality is considered good, with the fishery dominated by sunfish. A major algae bloom occurred in 1985 but the sources of the problem were not determined. WDNR recently acquired more than 80 acres of land and 800 feet of frontage on the lake and has installed a boat landing.



*Least darter*

### Resources of Concern (LR11)

WDNR's Heritage Resources Database indicates that the following water-dependent endangered, threatened or special concern species and/or communities have been sighted in this watershed within the last 20 years.

**Table 2. Endangered, Threatened or Species of Special Concern**

Species Common Name	Latin Name	Habitat
Blanding's Turtle	<i>Emydoidea Blandingii</i>	Otter Creek
Least Darter	<i>Etheostoma Microperca</i>	Allen Creek

**Table 3. Endangered, Threatened or Communities of Special Concern**

Plant Community	Location	Indicator Species/Description
Dry Mesic Prairie	Milton Prairie	Located on the upper slopes of a southwest facing hill; only 2 acres of 10 previously reported remain; the rest have been destroyed by a housing development. Native species include Indian grass, big bluestem, side-oats grama, leadplant, purple prairie clover, wild white indigo, small skullcap etc.
Lake/Hard Bog, Northern Wet Forest, Emergent Aquatic, Southern Sedge Meadow	Lima Bog (Lima Marsh State Wildlife Area)	This tract features a small bog lake surrounded by an extensive northern wet forest dominated by tamarack. Understory species include poison sumac, bog birch, winterberry, and willows. Sphagnum moss and typical bog species occur under the tamaracks near the lake. Bog species include: small cranberry, pitcher plant, round-leaved sundew, grass pink, etc.
Wet Mesic Prairie	Edgerton Railroad Prairie	About 300 feet long, varies in quality from poor to fairly good. This remnant is grass-deficient in some portions. Plants include rattlesnake master, new jersey tea, smooth blue aster, prairie blazing star, compass plant, prairie dock, etc. Prairie ant mounds are numerous.
Shallow seepage lake, Emergent aquatic, slow, hard, warm stream	Koshkonong Marsh	A large cattail-common reed marsh on the east side of Lake Koshkonong and bisected by the Rock River. Pockets of open water support submerged aquatics and water lilies. Diverse wildlife population and extensively used by hunters.
Floodplain forest	Koshkonong Creek Woods	Locally large stand of lowland hardwood forest bordering much-meandering Koshkonong Creek as it enters the lake. "Seemingly undisturbed and rich in wildlife," according to Jim Zimmerman (1980). A Great Blue Heron rookery occurred near the lakeshore. Water quality in the creek is poor due to pollutants from Sun Prairie and Cambridge. Diverse habitat in area includes: shrub swamp, marsh, hardwood swamp, scrubby disturbed forest.



*Small skullcap*



*Great Blue Heron rookery*



*Sandhill crane*



*Cranberries*



*Tamarack bog*

Plant Community	Location	Indicator Species/Description
Emergent Aquatic	Thiebeau Marsh	Large wetland complex located in the terminal moraine region of Rock Co., on the south side of Lake Koshkonong. Large expanses of cattail-bulrush are interspersed with smaller pockets of open water; wildlife rich. Sandhill cranes nest in the marsh; drainage canals traverse the southern portion of the marsh, lowering its natural area value.
Springs and Spring Runs, hard	Otter Creek Springs	Small spring complex, one of few left in Rock County, has been disturbed. Bubble springs are choked with water cress. Several submerged aquatics have been reported at the site; surrounding vegetation includes: sedges, reed canary grass, cattail, angelica and tall meadow rue.
Southern Dry Forest	Camp Wakowpa Forest	Dry mesic woods dominated by oak associated with burr oak, shagbark hickory and black cherry. Canopy species include: white ash, basswood, slippery elm.
Open Bog, Emergent Aquatic	Cranberry Marsh	Most of site is dominated by cattail with woolgrass and bulrush; beneath this layer, sphagnum moss is abundant, along with more typical bog species. Bog species include: steeple bush, poison sumac, cotton grass, bogbuckbean, cranberry and marsh cinquefoil. Area degraded from cattle grazing.
Dry Prairie, Lake-shallow hard seepage, Emergent Aquatic, Southern Sedge Meadow, Open Bog	Phyllis Smith Prairie	Three adjacent drumlin-ridges containing dry prairie on steepest and shallowest slopes. History of grazing, which ceased in the 1940s or 50s. Brome, red cedar, and black cherry encroachment threatens prairie.
Hard Bog, Northern Wet Forest, Southern Sedge Meadow, Open Bog, Southern Dry Forest,	Cambridge Bog	A diverse wetland featuring a 10-acre lake with surrounding emergent vegetation and a fen-like sedge meadow. Also present is northern wet forest with tamarack and red maple and understory containing sphagnum moss and common bog species. More than 260 species of vascular plants have been recorded for the wetland and surrounding upland.
Northern Wet Forest, Open Bog	Red Cedar Lake	A large and relatively undisturbed shallow lake illustrating good interspersions of cover types. An abundance of submerged and emergent aquatics along with meadow and tamarack swamp communities add diversity. Migrating waterfowl and wading birds in considerable numbers use the lake. The lake is situated in a rural setting and surrounded by agricultural land.
Southern Sedge Meadow, Lake - shallow, hard seepage, Emergent Aquatic, Southern Sedge Meadow	Rose Lake Marsh	This deepwater marsh contains a diversity of submerged aquatics including bladderwort, coontail and several pondweeds. Emergent plants surround the open water and a floating mat of sedges dominates the west side of the marsh. The wetland is rich in wildlife with numerous species of dragonflies, shorebirds, amphibians, and waterfowl present. The water depth and quality often vary from year to year.
Northern Wet Forest, Southern Sedge Meadow	Hope Lake Bog	This site lies at the north end of the lake and has been studied by University of Wisconsin ecologists. It's one of the best southern bogs and contains many northern plants uncommon in this region. Tamaracks to 8-inch diameter breast height dominate the woody vegetation. A shallow moat and a large amount of poison sumac make entry difficult.



Pitcher plant: leaf (above). An insect was found in the leaf contents of this carnivorous plant (below).



Poison sumac: found in wet places, this plant can cause a rash much like poison ivy.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

*The Dane County Regional Planning Commission has developed a set of more specific recommendations for abating polluted runoff in Dane County communities. This list should also be considered when planning water quality work and budget items.*

1. Residents and others in the Rock River Property Owners Association and the Lake Koshkonong Association should form a lake district to more effectively address lake and river water quality and management issues associated with Lake Koshkonong.<sup>2</sup>
2. The Lower Rock River Basin Team should evaluate acquisition of additional acreage in the Allen Creek drainage area under the Wisconsin Extensive Wildlife Habitat and/or Stewardship Programs for wetlands restoration and wetlands habitat improvement.<sup>1</sup>
3. The Lower Rock River Basin Team should acquire additional acreage in the Lower Koshkonong Creek drainage area under the Wisconsin Extensive Wildlife Habitat Program for wetlands restoration and wetlands habitat improvement.<sup>1</sup>
4. The Lower Rock River Basin Team should acquire additional property on Lake Koshkonong to improve public access to the lake.<sup>1</sup>
5. The Lower Rock River Basin Team should conduct whole-fish sampling for PCBs and pesticides in bottom feeders of Lake Koshkonong.<sup>1</sup>
6. The Lower Rock River Basin Team should conduct water quality monitoring on Clear Lake, and assess land uses in its sub-watershed, to evaluate water quality of the lake and the impacts of polluted runoff.<sup>1</sup>
7. The Lower Rock River Basin Team should consider Allen Creek sub-watershed as a "High" priority candidate for a small-scale nonpoint source project.<sup>1</sup>
8. The City of Fort Atkinson should enact and vigorously enforce a construction site erosion control ordinance and a stormwater management ordinance.<sup>2</sup>
9. The City of Fort Atkinson should develop a comprehensive stormwater management plan that includes various growth projection scenarios.<sup>2</sup>
10. The City of Fort Atkinson should conduct sewer service area planning as required in NR 121.<sup>3</sup>
11. The City of Cambridge should expand upon the partial work conducted by the Dane County Regional Planning Commission to conduct sewer service area planning for the entire municipal area, including the Town of Oakland Sanitary District.<sup>2</sup>
12. WDNR's Long Term Trends lake sampling protocol should be used in monitoring Lake Koshkonong.<sup>1, 2</sup>
13. Jefferson County and the Lake Ripley Lake Management District should take advantage of federal, state and private funding opportunities to acquire additional public access and lands on Lake Ripley.<sup>2</sup>
14. Jefferson County/the Lake Ripley Lake Management District should apply for Lake Planning/Lake Protection Grants to further protect Lake Ripley and its wetlands.<sup>2</sup>





*Pair of dragonflies: after mating the male clasps behind the female's head, while she deposits her eggs into the water.*

1. These recommendations are a basis for work planning or other decisions, which must be approved by the appropriate DNR division administrator (the recommendations are a starting point for the work planning process.
2. These recommendations are advisory to the public, local governments, lake management organizations, and other groups or agencies. These recommendations are not binding. No statutory or codified requirements exist
3. These recommendations are based on Wisconsin State Statutes and administrative codes and thus are binding unless the plan is formally revised.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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**REFERENCES (as in the Streams Table)**



*Ducklings*

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*Flying squirrel*



**Table 4. Streams in the Lower Koshkonong Creek Watershed (LR11)**

Stream Name	WBIC	County	Length (Miles)	Existing Use (Miles)	Potential Use (Miles)	Supporting Potential Use (Miles)	Current Codified Use	303(d) Status	Use Impairment		Data Assessment	Data Level	Trend	References
									Source	Impact				
Allen Creek	0813300	Jefferson	8	WWSF/8	Same	Part	ERW	N	CL, BY, NPS, CE, HM, URB	HAB, TURB, SED, TEMP, DO, NUT, MIG, FLOW	M	B4 H4 C2	D	17, 27, 47, 77
Koshkonong Creek- Lower	0808800	Dane Jefferson	24	WWSF/24	Same	Part - Thr	WWSF*	N	HM, CL, PSB, DEV, BY, PSM, NPS	DO, HAB, TURB, NUT, SED, TEMP,	M	B4 H3	I	10, 12, 15, 17, 27, 47, 83
Otter Creek	0812600	Rock	16	WWSF/16	Same	Part	WWSF*	N	HM, NPS, CL, BY	FLOW, HAB, TURB, SED, DO, TEMP, NUT	M	B4 H4 C3	S	4, 15, 17, 27, 28, 71, 77
Saunders Creek	0808000	Dane Rock	0 - 5	WWSF/5	Same	Part	WWSF*	N	PSM, CL, URB	HAB, TURB, SED, FLOW, NUTS, DO, TEMP	M	B3 H2	S	4, 10, 12, 15, 17, 28, 83
			5 - 15	WWFF/10	Same	Part	WWSF*	N	HM, NPS, CL	HAB, TURB, SED, FLOW, NUTS, DO, TEMP	M	B3 H2	S	
17 Unnamed Streams			41					N						

**Table 5. Lakes in the Lower Koshkonong Creek Watershed (LR11)**

Lake Name	County	Town, Range, Section	WBIC	Surface Area (Acres)	Max Depth (ft)	Mean Depth (ft)	Lake Type	Winter kill	Access	SH	Hg	Mac	LMO	TSI	TSI Class	Lake Plan Prot	P Sens	Impairment		Comments
																		Source	Impact	
Bowers Lake	Rock	T04NR13E S26	0774500	8	6	--	DG	Y	T	--	GA	--	--	--	--	--	II Ins	DEV	--	golf course dev.; Storrs WLA
Clear Lake	Rock	T04NR13E S20	0775000	82	20	--	SP	Y	BR	C	GA	--	ASSC	48***	ME	--	I Ins	303 (d)	--	adjacent to 55 WDNR acres
Edgerton Pond	Rock	T04NR12E S04	0808300	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	GA	--	--	--	--	--	--	NPS	NUT, SED, ALG, HAB, TURB	--
Fulton Pond	Rock	T04NR12E S18	0798700	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	GA	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Grass Lake	Rock	T04NR13E S17	0776200	70	3	--	SE	Y	--	--	GA	--	--	--	--	--	II	--	--	South of Lake Koshkonong
Hope Lake	Jefferson	T06NR13E S05	0809800	142	24	--	SE	Y	--	--	GA	--	--	--	--	--	IB	NPS	HAB	Bog
Lake Koshkonong	Rock	T04NR13E S07	0808700	10,460	7	5	DG	N	BR	--	GA	--	DIST ASSC	57***	EU	PLAN	I Ins	NPS	NUT, ACC	--
Lake Ripley	Jefferson	T06NR13E S07	0809600	418	44	18	SE	N	UNS	C	GA	EM	DIST	36***	ME/EU	PLAN PROT	I B	NPS, DEV, CE	HAB, MAC	LTTM
Red Cedar Lake	Jefferson	T06NR13E S20	0813100	359	6	--	SE	Y	--	R	GA	--	--	--	--	--	--		--	Deepwater marsh
Rice Lake	Dane	T05NR12E S13	0779500	170	8	--	--	Y	--	--	GA	--	--	--	EU	--	II B	SEP	--	--
Rose Lake	Jefferson	T06NR14E S29	0779600	8	10	--	SE	--	--	--	GA	--	--	--	--	--	I Ins	--	--	Wildlife Area
Storrs Lake	Rock	T04NR13E S26	0780300	40	23	--	DG	Y	T	--	GA	EM	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	Wetlands predominantly; in Storrs WLA
Sweet Lake	Dane	T05NR12E S23	0780400	12	4	--	--	Y	--	--	GA	--	--	--	--	--	II B	--	--	--

